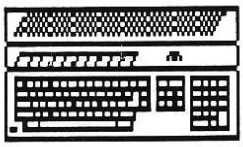
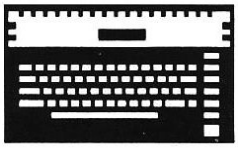
XIO3



May/June 1994



A Newsletter produced by the Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts, 1003 Amphion St, Victoria, B.C. CANADA V8S 4G2

Editor's Mumblings...

Chris Sherwood

Well, the May/June issue of XIO3 is finally out. It took me a while due to wedding plans, so I appologize for the delay. Not much other than the usual reports from the Executive. We need new submissions! It seems that the only regular submitters are the ones from the Executive and a few other regulars as well. Have a new piece of software or hardware? Tell us about it! Unless people start submitting articles, maybe the newlsetter should be called 'Reports from the Executive'.

"Excuse me....I'll get off my soapbox now..."

G.C.A.C.E. EXECUTIVE

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CREDITS

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are $25.00 per year for family memberships. Membership includes a subscription to the club newlsetter, XIO3, access to over 300 8-bit and 100+ ST disks, and if you are into telecommunications, increased time and upload/download ratio on the official club BBS, the Pothole BBS, (604) 642-6795, 300-14400 bps, 24 hours, 7 days.

MEETINGS

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month except December at the Saanich/Victoria Branch of the Victoria Public Library. Meetings start at 7 pm and usually run until about 9 pm. Copying of club disks, both 8-bit and ST usually takes place at meetings, unless the librarians cannot make it with their machines.

ADVERTISING IN XIO3

Members can place classified ads (ie: Buy, Sell, Swap) for computer related products free of charge.

Commercial advertisments must be submitted as camera-ready artwork and be pre-sized. Please mail the artwork along with payment in full to Garden City A.C.E. care of the editor. Newsletters are published in January, March, May, July, September and November. The deadline for submissions is the 10th of the month in which the newsletter is being published.

The rates for commercial ads are as follows: Full page - $15.00. Half Page - $8.00, Quarter Page - $5.00, Business Card - $3.00. Please call the Editor for additional information.

Peeking Around

by Gordon Hooper

Welcome to new corresponding member TED SCOTT from Qualicum Beach ... JORDAN HAYTHORNTWAITE has moved to Victoria from Duncan ... Welcome back to renewing member and club BBS sysop BOB NEX. Before he paid, he blackmailed me into not saying anything in this column or on the Pothole (his BBS) about the fact that he was a little tardy (a year and a half), so I won't. However, I did send an anonymous letter to B.C. Tel saying I had seen businesses advertising on the Pothole. You're welcome Bob. Hee Hee Hee Hee ... Thanks to Miami Valley A.C.E. in Ohio for sending our treasurer, JOHN TOWLER, the program "Treasurer's Report" for the 8-bit. We are exchanging newsletters with them. John actually wanted a program for his ST, but I was looking for a simple bookkeeping system, so it went to a good use. Thanks also to RON FETZER of Ol' Hackers in New York for writing the Turbo-BASIC program for the8-bit. This program was also on the "Atari Classic" magazine disk for February. GCACE has a subscription and is sorry to see that the magazine will end with the April issue due to lack of support. Thanks for a great effort, BEN POEHLAND. There is a chance somebody else (BOB WOOLEY) will take over, but it will fail too if 8-bitters don't open their wallets again ... GEORGE ROSE has moved, but tells me he intends to start the Sunday socials again. Watch here for information ... DAN CLIFFORD threatening to show up at the May meeting in some e-mail to me ... Wishes for a speedy recovery to MORGAN STEWART after his jaw surgery. We hope to see you at a meeting soon ... TED SKRECKY (the CyberDrooler) still waiting for the Jaguar to drop a little in price before he buys one ... DARYL TAYLOR not on the Pothole for a month because of problems with his computer. Can't say I didn't warn you about buying an IBM, Daryl ... Thanks to ROWLAND GRANT and wife TANYA for hosting the May executive meeting ... The demonstration at the May general meeting on the 19th will be of the Spectre GCR, a MacIntosh emulator, by treasurer JOHN TOWLER ... GCACE received requests in the mail for PD software in our library from DOMINIQUE THEVENIN of Qualicum Beach and BRYAN TESKEY of Port Alberni, two of our growing number of corresponding members. ... Emergency broadcast to DOUG SKRECKY: I can't survive without my periodic fixes of the cartoon strip "Everything's Ducky" which you previously sent to Victoria regularly. Maybe you could start sending methadone, or some other obscure drug your ongoing research has turned up. I don't need my head frozen, however ... CHRIS PRINCE is taking the summer off from UVic this year and is in the job market, if any of you employers feel like taking a chance ... JOHN PICKEN has been busy on the Pothole in the new 8-bit programming base. I find it hard to believe, but he actually is good for something other than being a way to dispose of beer in unlimited quantities ... If you're too shy to use them, send GORD at 475-0857 the information suitable for blackmailing fellow members. I'll print it ...

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Atari News & Rumors

by Rowland Grant

There were rumours that Atari was having cash flow problems. Atari seemed to be headed for a financial crisis. There was talk of raising more funds through the sale of shares. Indeed, shares were sold, and Atari Corp has avoided the fate facing Commodore (at least for the time being). Atari's financial statement for the last three months of 1993 reported sales of $8.5 million, compared to $25.5 million for the same period in 1992. There was a net loss of $22.6 million. Much of this is book keeping loss and not subtraction from the bank balance. For instance, $12.1 million in inventory was written down. Also the cost of reorganising Atari in Europe and closing its subsidiary in Australia ran up a bill of $6 million. Of course, with very little to sell in 1993, the total sales for the year were down to $28.8 million. The losses over all were $48.9 million, but much of this was inventory and restructuring. We could see, over the last year or so, that Atari was slowly manoeuvring out of the computer market. Now Sam Tramiel admitted that Atari has "substantially completed our transition from our older technology products and the consolidation of our world wide operations". This was interpreted by a financial analyst as meaning that Atari has shifted from selling computers in Europe to selling video games in the U.S.

I mentioned in a previous column that Atari Corp might need some outside cash to keep going. I speculated that I.B.M. might be the angel. However, I had forgotten that Time-Warner already held 25 percent of Atari. Moreover, Time-Warner is involved in various aspects of multi-media and video games. In hind sight it seems natural that Time-Warner would protect its investment. Especially now, when Atari has a chance of holding a strong position in the very profitable video game market. So Time-Warner bought 1.5 million shares of Atari Corp at $8.50 a share. Now (subject to SEC approval) Time-Warner will hold 27 percent of Atari Corp. There are rumours that Time-Warner has options to buy a lot more. So while Commodore share prices dropped and trading was suspended, shares in Atari Corp went up to over seven dollars. Everything now depends on the sales of the Jaguar game console. One expert estimated that Atari will have to ship at least half a million game machines this year to stay in the market. If Atari can't do that, the market will be too small for the major game makers and they will drop the Jaguar.

As comic relief in this tense situation there were contradictory statements by Atari and Nintendo America over a legal settlement. Apparently software algorithms can be patented in the U.S. The old Atari pioneered game software, and it accumulated a portfolio of about 90 patents. Atari Corp. is the owner of these patents. When Nintendo and Sega seemed to be making use of some of its more important algorithms without paying royalties, Atari went to court. The main patent in question, known as '114', relates to parallax scrolling. This is a technique used to scroll different objects and backgrounds to give the illusion of speed and motion. Could this be the famous Star Raiders technique? At any rate, Nintendo settled out of court through a rather complicated arrangement. Atari stated that it had received a big payment as settlement. Nintendo stated that it had received royalty free rights to some of Atari's patents and a cash payment as well. Atari said that Nintendo was "full of it", and Nintendo's counsel got huffy. I can't see how Atari could be induced to give up its patents and pay Nintendo as well, particularly since Atari was the plaintiff. Atari's position makes the most sense. However, there are rumours that might suggest that both parties are correct in their statements.

This is because the settlement involved another party, Atari Games Corp. Atari Games has a subsidiary called Tengen that produces game cartridges for Nintendo machines, amongst others. Nintendo prevents game makers from entering its market without its approval. Nintendo game consoles will not work unless the game cartridge has a special chip in it. The chip circuit is patented by Nintendo. Tengen made its own chip and Nintendo claimed violation of its patent. While Nintendo managed to beat off legal action against it for limiting trade by using the chip, the bad publicity has forced it to abandon the practice. My understanding is that Atari Games agreed to settle Nintendo's claim against Tengen through a cash payment. However, this payment would first go towards the settlement of Atari Corp's claim against Nintendo. Atari Corp would licence its older patents to Nintendo and any cash left over in the settlement would go to Nintendo. There are rumours that Time-Warner was behind this arrangement, after all it owns 77 percent of Atari Games. This strange settlement has the effect of transferring funds from Atari Games to Atari Corp at a time when Atari Corp badly needs cash. And Atari says that the cash is in the bank. Of course, Nintendo is pleased since it did not pay anything to Atari directly, nor did it have to admit that it violated Atari's patents. But the cash involved was mostly moved around within Time-Warner's interests, brilliant! Now Atari is hoping that Sega can be induced to settle out of court too. Oh yes, I have heard that Atari Games, Tengen and some other divisions of Time-Warner have been amalgamated into a subsidiary called Time Warner Interactive. Now there is only one Atari.

Cash flow is not the only problem Atari faces. There have been Jaguar production delays. According to Atari there has been a shortage of custom chips. There are rumours that there may have been quality control problems too, and some shipments may have been recalled. There have been complaints about video defects (the red screen syndrome) and sound not working with some games. However, Atari has been exchanging these defective units with properly functioning consoles. Apparently the national rollout for the Jaguar began in March. But the shortage of stock has caused a slowdown. Atari is now concentrating on sales in Los Angeles, rather than on the ten market areas planned. Still, Jaguars seem to be turning up in small quantities all over the U.S. Some stores have been remarking

con't from page 4

that they sell their stock of Jaguars as soon as they arrive. Others claim that there are lots of consoles on hand. Atari dealers can get as many Jaguars as they like from the main Atari distributors. Locally, Tesseract was contacted by its Atari software source (in the U.S.), and asked if it wanted a shipment of Jaguar consoles and games. Tesseract is not into game consoles and declined the offer. However, a Jaguar console has actually been seen for sale in Victoria at Master Player Game Center (University Heights). One unconfirmed report says that 110,000 Jaguars were shipped by the end of March. At this rate Atari might just make the half million figure by December. Actually, their target is said to be one million shipped before December. Jaguars have not been released (officially) for Europe. After all, European products need different video output, scan frequency and power supplies. This means IBM will have to make special production runs for Europe. Still, there is a grey market for Jaguar consoles in Europe, and a few thousand are said to have turned up in Holland and Germany already. Jaguar models with PAL video have been seen for sale in Britain, so maybe there has been a European production run. Anyway, Atari is continuing with its U.S. advertising and as new games arrive, they are advertised with the Jaguar. Not all Jaguar ads are getting great reviews, but some of the recent ones are reported to be an improvement. I haven't seen any Jaguar ads myself.

New hardware for the Jaguar is slowly coming onto the market. Release of the CD unit for the Jaguar will be delayed again. September is the new target date. Atari says that virtual reality hardware would be too expensive for the Jaguar. However, a light gun for the Jaguar is being developed. Mars Merchandising of Lombard Illinois will be offering the JagDapter for $49.95. The JagDapter is a video interface supplying composite video, split composite, RGB and S-video. So you could make use of any composite or RGB monitor as well as the monitor connection on a TV. ICD will be supporting the Jaguar too. It will be marketing the Cat Box, an audio, video and communications expansion box for $49.95. The ICD Cat Box provides s-video, composite video, analog RGB, L.R. audio jacks and stereo headphone output, comlynx and RS232 connection. The Cat Box may be expanded in the future to include an internal modem and midi outputs. Toad Computers is offering a cable connector for the Jaguar with the same video and sound outputs as the Cat Box. It's called the Video Toad and retails for $34.95. The rumour that a Jaguar card for PC computers is being developed has surfaced again.

New games for the Jaguar are not appearing very quickly. One game came out in March, Tempest 2000. This adaptation of a classical arcade game was done by Jeff Minter of Llama Soft. Tempest 2000 has been well received, getting game of the month awards and so forth. However, this makes a total of only five Jaguar games: Cybermorph, Crescent Galaxy, Raiden, Dino Dudes, Tempest 2000. The long awaited Alien vs Predator has been delayed further. There are rumours that Fox, the owner of both Alien and Predator movies objected to the quality of the game's preview images. So A vs P was re-rendered to give twice the original video resolution. This means that pixels will not be so obvious as the moving image enlarges. The game may be ready to be put in cartridge by now. However it takes from six to eight weeks after the programming is finished to prepare the ROM chips, and even longer to get the game on the dealer's shelves. Atari's schedule calls for Alien vs Predator, Wolfenstein 3D, Checkered Flag II and Doom to be out before the end of June. Kasumi Ninja and Star Raiders 2000 should be out in July, Tiny Toon Adventures is scheduled for October and Battlemorph (on CD) should be available by December. Atari is hoping that other game developers add more to this list. Some 85 developers have signed up with Atari and more than 100 Jaguar development systems have been sold. There are more than 31 titles under development and all could be released before the end of this year. I understand that one of these, Battlezone 2000, has been sent out for chip production already. Some of the big game makers such as WMS Industries and Accolade have decided to try a few games on the Jaguar. These companies have produced a number of winners for Nintendo and Sega in the past. There are rumours that one of them is doing the infamous Mortal Kombat game for the Jaguar. However, Atari may not be waiting for the independent developers to complete Jaguar games. Instead, Atari is licensing existing games and doing the Jaguar conversions itself. There are rumours that Atari's programming staff is being expanded to fifty strong. With this staff, Atari hopes to develop or adapt up to 55 games for the Jaguar in the next six months.

I have come across rumours of a future Atari game console in development. The new machine will run Jaguar software and may even have an adapter that allows Lynx games to run. The circuitry will have a 64 bit bus throughout. In the present Jaguar, only the RISC chip set operates a 64 bit bus. Other parts of the circuit are governed by a Motorola 68000 chip that handles a sixteen bit circuit. There are contradictory rumours about what Atari would use as a replacement. One specifies a 68040 CPU chip, but that would cost more than the rest of the game machine. Another rumour suggests that a number of cheap CPU chips running in parallel could do the work. And further, an arrangement of eight Z80 chips used as parallel processors is being considered. Z80 chips, once the core of CPM computers, are now used in all sorts of common devices such as microwave ovens, and are very cheap. Since eight Z80 chips would take up a lot of space on a console circuit board, this rumour is questionable too. Indeed, I understand that the Jaguar design really didn't need the 68000 chip in the first place. These rumours came out shortly before the first of April, but you never know.

Sam Tramiel's statements would lead us to believe that Atari is dropping computers. However, others at Atari have explained that these statements are aimed at investors and do not mean that Atari will completely abandon its computers. Bob Brodie has explained that Atari cannot handle more than one major product at a time, but Atari will get back to computers when it can. It has been reported that sales of Falcon computers has picked up recently. The

music industry is the main market, but they have been selling well in Germany to Atari enthusiasts. The recent shipments of Falcon computers contain no hard drives. However it is a simple matter to install a 3.5 inch IDE type hard drive, and they tend to be fairly inexpensive. If Falcon owners are unsatisfied with the speed and memory of their computers, Wizztronics has created the Barracuda accelerator board. This board incorporates a Motorola 68EC040 chip running at 16 mhz. The price is around $650. Upgrades to 32 mhz will be available later. The Barracuda board can accept a memory expansion card that allows up to 128MB of TT fast RAM. The whole unit plugs into the Falcon expansion bus. For music systems, a rack mounting case is available for the Falcon. This case includes a separate keyboard interface and a heavy duty power supply. There is a rumour that Wizztronics is working on a TOS/GEM based computer using the PowerPC chip. A Berlin company called Overscan has also developed a 68040 33 mhz accelerator board for the Falcon this will be presented at FEZ-a-BIT, a small Atari exhibition early in May. Atari was not represented this year at the important Cebit exhibition in Hannover.

Hardware development for the Falcon continues. A 486SX PC board is under development. Also there is the Video Funnel, a hardware video frame grabber. This device requires at least 12 MB of RAM. Apparently it allows full screen redraws at thirty frames a second. Rom Software, another Berlin company has released an interface called Heat Seeker. This enables a Falcon to drive an Atari SLM804 laser printer. This printer required a DMA port which the Falcon lacks. The music industry is well supplied with new software releases. There is Steinbergs Cubase Score 2.0, Emagic's Logic audio Falcon, Compo's Musicom 2 and computerbild's Digitap. Cubase Score 2.0 handles up to 32 music staves per page. This system operates under the M-Ross multitasking environment. Steinberg's software does not seem to work under Multitos. Finally, the latest release of Atari Works has at least one serious bug. This is the black page syndrome, a printer driver bug where a page occasionally comes out all black. It is rumoured that Atari staff are trying to fix this bug in their sparetime. All of Atari's programming resources are focused on Jaguar software development.

Atari has declared large losses in 1993 due to the writedown of inventory. What inventory? Atari hasn't lowered the Jaguar or TT prices below cost so it can't be those. Of course Atari did cut prices on the Lynx game player, but that was long ago. It would seem that the inventory was mostly unsold STe stock, and some of it is turning up on the market. For instance, Toad computers is advertising the availability of 1040 STe's, Mega STe's, Stacy laptops and SM147 monitors. These are all new and have the 90 day Atari warranty. B&C ComputerVisions has a similar supply. Also I notice some major British dealers advertising Mega STe's. I remember about two years ago, Wizard Computers in Vancouver was reduced to selling reconditioned ST's because Atari wouldn't send them any stock. And now we see that Atari had computers stored somewhere all the time. That inventory was losing Atari money by just sitting there. Well anyway, its good to see some STe computers are still available somewhere. David Small has finally reported in. He reveals that Spectre 3.1, a much improved version of his software for the Spectre GCR Macintosh emulator, will be released as soon as the manuals are printed. This version will be able to handle Apple's system seven. David says that a further upgrade, Spectre 3.2, is now under development. Then there is the emulation of a colour Mac, which could take a bit of time. Another long awaited software item is Neodesk 4.0. It was supposed to be released by now, but the release date has been set back a month or so. Meanwhile another multitasking environment for the ST and Falcon has turned up at an Atari show in Manchester (so I'm told). This is called SMS2 and is in a cartridge. SMS2 is configurable by preparing EPROM chips for the cartridge. The whole system costs 135 pounds sterling, which seems a bit expensive.

The magazine called Processor Direct was supposed to come out last year as a Falcon only magazine. It now seems that it will be published, but as a general Atari magazine. Processor Direct will be on glossy paper, will use fairly small type to cram in the articles, and will consist of 26 large pages. Processor direct, from Two Worlds Publishing, will cost $4.00 (CDN) per issue or $33 per twelve issues. Two Worlds Publishing, #225 - 3837 Northgate Bvld, Tampa FL 33624 USA. Another new magazine is the Atari United newsletter. It will be on disk. Considering the lack of Atari publications in North America, these efforts are very welcome. At the moment we are left with ST Informer and Current Notes. Atari users need these magazines, if only for the advertisements that they carry. There should be lots of room for another print magazine. I was looking at Amiga magazines today. At least there are glossy, quality magazines for the Amiga on most news stands. None of them mentioned the financial crisis Commodore is facing. These Amiga magazines are much thinner than they used to be, but they revealed considerable vitality in the Amiga world. One thing that impressed me were the numerous program listings. Its been years since I have seen anything like that for Atari computers (sigh).

So there we have it. Atari is now a game machine maker. Atari computer users are pretty much on their own. Atari is ahead of its competition, but Atari's success in electronic games is not assured. The production of Jaguar consoles is slower than it should be and game releases are being delayed. There is a national TV advertisement for the Jaguar in the U.S. However national delivery is in small allotments, and mostly to certain chain stores. It will be sometime before Atari can supply every video game dealer who wants to sell Jaguars. The Jaguars that have been delivered to dealers are selling very well, but the volume hardly pays for the advertising. So Atari is having trouble keeping its head above water. Time-Warner might save Atari from itself. But don't count on it. Time-Warner has also invested in the 3DO multimedia system, and Tengen makes games for Sega. For the next few months, Atari's Jaguar will still have the edge. Atari must establish a large Jaguar user base. If it fails to do this before Nintendo and Sega launch their new machines, it will be "game over" for Atari.

ST Library Report

Ted Skrecky

Looks like it has been several months since the last time I wrote a library report for XIO 3. Although I haven't been spending much time doing word processing, it has been business as usual at the GCACE ST Library. The ST catalogue was recently updated. It is now at version 3.2. Each club member with an ST should have received a disk in the mail containing the latest and greatest version.

I have said this before but it is always worth repeating. If there are any programs that interest you, the ST Library is always available for disk copying at each club meeting. All you need to do is bring along some blank disks and I will fill them up. Most of the programs on our club disks are archived using ARC or LHARC but, for anybody who has problems with unarchiving, just let me know and I will unarchive the programs and put them on a disk for you. Unfortunately, because each meeting lasts only 2 hours, I may not be able to copy everything but I will try to do my best.

The alternative to getting STuff from club meetings is to fire-up the modem, if you have one, and log onto the Pothole BBS (642-6795). Because of limited hard drive space, not every program in the ST library is on our club BBS but most of the better programs are there. The Pothole also has a great selection of 8bit files. Any new 8bit programs aquired by the club eventually make their way into the GCACE 8bit file sig.

There is one other way of aquiring club disks though it probably is only of interest to members who don't live in the Victoria area. ST disks can be mailed directly to your door for the price of $2 per disk. The executive decided $2 was a good price as it would definitely cover the cost of the disk, envelope and postage. I doubt there are many, if any, clubs that charge only $2 for a disk containing up to 800K of archived files. Certainly no commercial organizations will give this kind of deal. It is not uncommon when dealing with some companies to find yourself being charged $4 for a single sided disk containing uncompressed files. By the way, I should mention that any Atari users that have paid $25 to become corresponding members are entitled to 4 free disks. A certain percentage of each member's $25 yearly fee goes towards room rental, however, members who live in far-away places such as Outer Mongolia aren't going to be attending meetings so it was agreed by the executive that they would get 4 free disks. A good deal.... yes?

For members who haven't logged onto the Pothole BBS for the last few months, I should mentioned that one major change has occurred. Thanks to Bob Nex (SysOp Boomer), the Pothole is now networked with other Atari bulletin boards all across North America. There is also one message base called "Europe Bound" that connects us with boards in Holland, Germany and England. In the North American net there is not one but many message bases. There are regular computer bases such as the 8-bit base, ST base & IBM base and many other bases which have nothing to do with computers such as the parenting base. I only scan the computer bases so I can't say how great or how totally lame the other areas are. Basically, you have to ring the Pothole, get your account validated by the SysOp, and start exploring.

Garden City A.C.E. now has a club message base on the Victoria FreeNet (595-2300). At the main prompt of this BBS, type "go tech" and then enter "2" for the Atari Sig and you will have arrived in our area. The FreeNet is a "must see" for Atari users.

On FreeNet, there are several Atari newsgroups which can be found in the USENET News area. These newsgroups are available at many sites all over the world so don't be surprised if you ocassionally find a message written in French or German. To get to these groups, select "6 - Library and Information Services" at the main prompt. Then select "9 - Usenet News & Electronic Magazines" and then select "1 - Usenet News". You will find a menu system which, if you spend enough time selecting this and that, you will get to one of the Atari groups. However, there is a much easier way. Instead of using the menus, you can type the word "go" and then the name of the group you want to read. For example, the name of the ST area is comp.sys.atari.st so just type "go comp.sys.atari.st" and you will go directly to the first message. To read a message on the FreeNet, type "T" which will "type" the text to the screen. To read the next message, simply type "N". Bye the way, you should use uppercase "T" & "N" so that the whole message will be read into your buffer. If you use lowercase, only a portion of the message is shown and then it asks if you want to read more of the current message.

Comp.sys.atari.st is just one of the Atari related newsgroups. Another ST one is comp.sys.atari.st.tech which deals with programming on the ST. The group for the Atari 8-bit computers is comp.sys.atari.8bit. Also, if you are interested in Atari's new 64-bit game system, Jaguar, rec.games.video.atari is the place to go to. There are a number of other newsgroups that have atari talk, none of which I have looked at, but I will list them incase somebody wants to check them out: comp.sys.atari.advocacy. comp.sys.palmtops, rec.games.video.arcade, rec.games.video.misc & rec.games.video.classic. As you can see, if you do get yourself an account on the FreeNet, you will have lots of new reading material. Like the BBS name says, it costs nothing to get on the FreeNet so it is an exceptionally good deal.

If anybody has visited Tesseract Software recently, you will have noticed that the Atari ST software section is gone. This was

nuked back in January of this year. Tesseract may not have any Atari titles on their shelves, but if there is any software you require, Richard at Tesseract would be happy to order whatever you need from his U.S. distributor. ST magazines, however, are still available. As long as most of the magazines sell, Richard says he will continue to bring them in. If, in future, it is decided that the ST magazine section must be nuked then, like the software, you could ask Richard to order copies of your favourite magazines just for yourself. Actually, there is some pretty good commercial software being given away on the cover disks of some of these magazines. I recently aquired the Tempus Iw word processor and the Calligrapher Professional DTP package from these magazines. If you like reading a magazine geared to the more serious user of ST computers, you can't do much better than Atari ST Review. For game enthusiasts, such as myself, ST Format is probably the best. There are two other magazines that Tesseract gets in and they are ST User, which is quite good, and ST Informer, the only ST magazine published in North America!

Well, that's about it for this edition of the ST Library Report. I will try to write again for XIO 3 before another several months pass. Right now, though, I am going back to playing Towers. Towers is a new shareware Dungeon Master clone which is quite fun to play. To complete the game, you must pay the shareware fee ($15 US) in order to get the manual which contains codes, allowing you to access the later levels. However, even if you don't pay the fee, you do have access to several levels which do take a little time to complete. Towers is in the ST library under Disk #137 (2 disks in total).

Club Meetings

by: Rowland Grant

The March general meeting featured an update of the OMEn operating system by Craig Carmichael. Craig has published two issues of his OMEn Herald in which he lays out the nature and features of OMEn and his policy concerning its distribution. OMEn will be distributed as shareware. This should make it accessible to any user of software that runs under OMEn. At the moment OMEn is not quite ready for general release. However, there has been a good deal of interest in it. ST Review magazine in Britain ran a brief article on OMEn, with illustrations, in the April 1994 issue. A few months back Craig brought demo disks of OMEn to a club meeting and gave away copies to anyone interested. From the illustrations in ST Review, I would assume that Craig has added more to the demo. At the meeting Craig reviewed the development to date, and showed the fonts that he added. These look good on the screen, especially since Craig was using a Falcon and a VGA monitor. The fonts print out just as well too. Craig brought some text print-outs and some images printed in colour. These were very impressive, especially when we learned that they had been printed using a 9-pin dot matrix printer. After his presentation, there was considerable discussion as to the practical aspects of distributing OMEn and the ways that it could be used by programmers. I have noticed mention of OMEn on internet downloads. Those ST users who have tried other systems such as UNIX derivatives seem to be very interested in OMEn, especially since the OMEn kernal is small compared with UNIX (a notorious memory hog).

The April general meeting featured swap and shop. Members brought their spare equipment to sell or trade. There was a 520ST, an almost new dot matrix printer, PC boards and several collections of 8-bit goodies, all going at very reasonable prices. I brought a few things to sell and some money. I sold a couple of items but parted with most of my cash. On another topic, Bob Nex, the sysop of Pothole BBS reported that the revised network is working well. We are now in contact with other Atari boards across North America and beyond. As a result some other clubs are making an effort to contact us directly. We have recently received letters from St Paul ACE and the North West Phoenix Atari Connection. George Rose also received a brief visit from Reg Loeppky of the Winnipeg Atari ST Users Group.

Finally I should comment on the generosity of Ted and Doug Skrecky. Ted not only prepared the ST library catalogue disks that we sent out to all ST user members, but Ted also donated the disks, all fifty of them. In addition Ted has just given the library one issue of the ST Review and two recent issues of the ST Informer. Ted is a frequent donor of magazines. In Vancouver, Doug Skrecky found an old copy of the Atari User's Encyclopedia (for 8-bits). He sent it over for our library along with a recent issue of ST Applications (not available in Victoria). Doug Skrecky lives and works in Vancouver and yet he is an active participant in our club. Doug is always on the lookout for Atari news. He sends newspaper and fax clippings regularly. We all have enjoyed his humorous and penetrating articles in XIO3. Incidentally, Doug wrote an article entitled "Saving Atari" for the November 1992 issue of XIO3. For Atari to survive, he wrote, it must forget home computers and make game machines. Remember, you read it here first!

Atari-8 Affairs

by Rowland Grant

The sad news is that Atari Classics, "the magazine for the dedicated 8-bit user" will put out one more issue for April 1994 and then will cease publication. Ben Poehland, the managing editor of Atari Classics, decided to be honest with the subscribers, refused new subscriptions, and quit while the magazine was financially still in the black. Unfortunately the number of subscribers has been declining steadily and Ben could see the operation going into a spiral towards bankruptcy. Ben himself has put up over $2000 to start Atari Classics. Neither Ben nor the editorial staff got paid anything. The subscription money mostly went to Unicorn Publications for printing and distribution. It's too bad. Atari Classics put out some superb issues. The video hackers issue in December may have been the peak. Bob Woolley of the San Leandro Club in California has been putting out feelers for a continuation of Atari Classics as a users group project. Articles would be submitted to some coordinating club that would see to the publication and distribution. Dale Wooster, president of North West Phoenix Atari Connection (NWPAC), has made a similar proposal. While our club would support such a publication as we did with PSAN, there is a concern that the coordinating club might be taking on too much.

More encouraging news comes from Fine Tooned Engineering. You will remember That FTE has all the rights to ICD's 8-bit products. Now FTE is producing an expansion board for the 800XL which it calls the Mars8. This board presumably fits inside the computer. It provides circuitry and sockets for huge amounts of RAM. There will be sockets for ROM chips such as Sparta DOS and R-Time8 as well as language ROMs such as Action!, Basic XE or MAC65. While the Mars8 board has been advertised, nobody seems to have seen one yet. Disk based Sparta DOS 3.2d is often preferred over the Sparta DOS X cartridge. The disk version of Sparta DOS hasn't been available for about a year. Now Sparta DOS 3.2f is being released as share ware, along with the Sparta DOS tool kit. For a registration fee of $19.95 (US) FTE will send the documents. At first it was assumed that the changed version number 3.2f meant that this was an upgrade over the 3.2d. Apparently not. The shareware version of Sparta DOS is the same as the earlier commercial version. Sparta DOS has been considered by many as the finest DOS for the 8-bit Atari. And now, at least, Sparta DOS is available to all for a modest amount.

Apparently the 8-bit Atari SIO port is not fast enough to use the full speeds available to certain printers. Now RAMBIT in England is selling a printer interface that connects to the parallel bus of an XL or 130XE computer. This is supposed to speed up the output of data to the printer. To work properly the interface requires a modified ROM containing a printer driver for your particular printer. This can be supplied as an EPROM and a kit for EPROM production is supplied. This product sounds a bit cumbersome for most users, but if it works as claimed, it might be handy for doing graphics and bitmapped text on a fast printer.

The remarkable range of hardware projects possible on the Atari 8-bit computer is due to the great flexibility of its input/output capabilities. Glen Saunders, in an online article, explains how this came about. Apparently the original chip set, ANTIC, POKEY, and CTIA, was meant for an advanced game machine. Seeing the popularity of home computers in 1978, Atari decided toenter the market. The experimental game player turned into a home computer. By assigning tasks to these chips the Atari 800 was able to do with ease what other computers had to accomplish by brute force. The PIA and POKEY chips govern a great range of I/O possibilities. For instance, Glen says that he runs a hard drive connected to the cartridge port of his Atari 1200 and XEGS. On reading Glen's article I recalled a conversation with someone about ten years ago. I was in a bookstore that kept Atari books (in the days when there were such things). A man saw me looking at an Atari book and remarked that he had an Atari 800. He said that he used it to control 128 feedback-relay devices that responded to soil humidity and delivered water to various plots in his tree nursery. He had designed an interface that used all four joystick ports. He had written the software himself. No he wasn't a computer expert. He claimed that programming the Atari really wasn't difficult.

One of the most valuable books for Atari users who wish to write their own software is "Mapping the Atari" by Ian Chadwick. Not only does this book map out the memory addresses used by the operating system, it includes all sorts of advice and commentary on how one could use the knowledge. Unfortunately Mapping the Atari has been long out of print. This prompted an effort by Andy Thompson to rewrite the book. TWAUG has agreed to publish the book if there is sufficient support for it. At first Andy thought that the new book would fill about 250 pages, but it was closer to 400 when he finished. TWAUG has sent out some excerpts from the new Mapping the Atari book to gauge the market. This file has been uploaded to the Pothole BBS in the GCACE 8-bit file area as MTADOC.ARC. These excerpts look very interesting. David Ewens reports that there has been a good response to the book proposal in Britain. Max Gerum of TWAUG has gone ahead with reformatting all 400 pages and has printed some samples. The price isn't firm at the moment, but David estimates that a limited run could sell for about 16 pounds sterling plus postage.

Ron Fetzer of Ol' Hackers has released yet another elegant piece of software called "Treasurer's Report". Ron is the treasurer of Ol' Hackers User Group. I gather that the accounting is fairly straight forward, consisting of income and expenditures. Rather than messing around with complex accounting programs, Ron has created his own software that is better suited to a small society. Ron's program will handle up to 200 income and 200 expenditure items, and will print out a formatted report. The program is written in Turbo BASIC. The program is well documented (as usual), also

included are the source code and an example accounts file. On the back of the disk is a text file reader/printer program by Ron called "Quick Docs". This makes it easy to read the documentation. The programs on either side of the disk are autorun files, everything needed is included. Thanks to Ron for his fine programs. They will be added to our 8-bit library holdings.

The 8-bit library has received more items since the last issue. We have received the TWAUG newsletter issue 8 and the disk. One side of the disk is John Picken's TurboDUP utility. I understand that some of Doug Skrecky's work will be featured in future issues of TWAUG. The February issue of Atari Classics has also arrived with disk. The disk has a recent version of TextPro on it among other programs. We have received New Atari User issue 66. Thanks to Gordon Hooper we also have the disk to go with it. John Dickerson has sent us three disks, mainly games this time. One is the DACE Card Game Disk that they prepared for the Sacramento Atari Expo in March. From the account in ST Informer, I gather that numbers were not large, but those that did attend werededicated users (with money to spend). The DACE February-March DOM includes Dandy Dungeon. The April DOM has two games: Monopoly and Symbolism.

GARDEN CITY ACE MEMBERSHIP - 06 May 1994

Family Name	1st Name	Phone
Anguish	Ian	381-6393
Bate	Denis	389-0981
Black	Noel	388-4529
Brackenridge	Ron	652-2199
Carmichael	Craig	384-0499
Clifford	Dan	380-9685
Davies	Michael	727-3266
De Pol	Ron	479-6807
Erickson	Mark	477-6032
Etheridge	Bob	479-7271
Ferdinand	George	389-0599
Ferguson	Dan	385-2945
Finnis	Frederic	592-6448
Grant	Rowland	598-3661
Hamel	Eliane	360-2663
Harrison	Michael	381-4198
Haythornthwaite	Jordan	746-5827
Heslop	Graham	595-3259
Hooper	Gordon	475-0857
Lemmen	Steven	595-7811
Maindonald	Bud	652-0014
McGuire	George	479-7668
Milner	Edward	368-3202

Family Name	1st Name	Phone
Moen	Dan	480-1860
Myers	Greg	380-3733
Napp	Arnold	477-3690
Nex	Bob	642-6358
O'Neill	John	383-4062
Picken	John	598-2386
Prince	Chris	249-3596
Rines	Arnold	479-1374
Rose	George	652-0572
Rothschild	Ray	385-6141
Sherwood	Chris	385-7528
Sim	M.	384-8150
Skrecky	Doug	669-4825
Skrecky	Ted	598-6173
Smith	Louis	360-4071
Strang	Mark	385-1753
Stewart	Morgan	595-6015
Taylor	Daryl	380-6927
Teskey	Bryan	724-5593
Thivenin	Dominique	???-????
Thibodeau	Ron	658-4518
Towler	John	382-5083